

Activity 14.1: Race to the Top / Early Learning Challenge

Early Childhood Directors Leadership Institute

2015 Final Report

Contract Number
27987

Submitted to the:
North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education

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Introduction

Nationally, North Carolina has been a leader in the early care and education field and it is with much appreciation that Child Care Resources Inc. works with the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education to advance this system. This report will provide a summary of the accomplishments of the Race to the Top/Early Learning Challenge Grant (RttT-ELC): Activity 14.1 – The Early Childhood Directors Leadership Institute project. A summary of the accomplishments of this initiative throughout the project, including subjective information about lessons learned, challenges, successes and any implications across for future policy decisions is included in this report.

Activity 14.1: Early Childhood Directors Leadership Institute

The lead administrator of a child care program is responsible for every aspect of its program operations and is often the gatekeeper to its quality. These leadership responsibilities are multi-faceted, ranging from basic sanitation compliance to complex educational, fiscal, and legal issues. The lead administrator's role requires significant skill in communication and decision-making, with an increasing focus on the performance of child care centers as business enterprises that require skilled resource management and leadership (Nupponen, 2006). Additionally, coaching and mentoring programs help promote desired changes by providing opportunities for administrators to focus on their leadership capabilities (Fleming & Love, 2003).

In research conducted across 560 centers in 25 states, researchers at the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership (2010) found that the quality of instructional leadership practices and the learning environment for children were stronger when directors were well-educated and had access to leadership and business administration training, along with peers support. Unfortunately, further research shows that many child care program administrators assume their positions without the necessary instructional, management, and leadership skills and experience to sustain high quality services and financially viable programs. In addition, opportunities for growth and development for these particular leaders in these areas have been scarce. Gaps in the knowledge of early childhood program leaders include knowledge and skills specific to financial management, planning, leadership development, personnel and human resources, and curricular planning and implementation (Boulton, 2008).

The overarching goal of the Early Childhood Directors Leadership Institute (ECDLI) was to design and administer the implementation of a statewide leadership institute for diverse early childhood center directors from across the state of North Carolina. As part of the project, curriculum for CEU credits were developed and delivered over the course of each of the 3 three-day Institutes. In addition to delivery of the curriculum, the Institutes provided for training on other topics including the Program Administration Scale (PAS), the theory and application of Small Tests of Change (STOC), and the process of creating a Change Framework for becoming a culturally competent leader at both the program and systems level. The Program Administration Scale was used to assess the leadership and management practices and capacities of each of the 100 participants in their respective early childhood programs.

Attached to this report is an Evaluation of the Early Childhood Directors Leadership Institute, completed by Dr. Rebecca Shore and Dr. Richard Lambert at The Center for Educational Measurement and Evaluation of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Additional evaluation of the entire project is provided in this report.

All project goals related to the Institutes were met or exceeded. In addition to delivery of the leadership curriculum, the Institutes provided for training on additional leadership topics including the Program Administration Scale (PAS), the theory and application of Small Tests of Change (SToC), and the process of creating a change framework for

becoming a culturally competent leader at both the program and systems level. Sixty-three of the 70 leaders in Institute III completed all components of the STOC. Eighty-two percent selected problems that involved existing policies or procedures and 18% developed plans for new policies or procedures. By the completion of the final Institute, 87% of the directors were ready to implement the changes in their centers and 13% needed more data or further study of the problem before implementation.

The PAS was used to evaluate program quality and managerial and administrative effectiveness. Complete pre- and post-assessments on the PAS were collected from 66 of the participating programs. On average, the program completers successfully accomplished 77.16% of their program improvement goals. The median percent of goals completed was 81.50%. Many of the participants were able to complete 100% of their goals (30.3%) and 78.1% of them completed the majority of their goals. The PAS was the primary indicator of program improvement and nearly all programs demonstrated improvements. The difference between the average pre and post-test scores was statistically significant and the average gain score was 1.06 (standard deviation = .60, effect size = 1.35). Over 98% of the programs made gains in PAS scores and most of the participating programs ended with average PAS scores in the "Good" range.

Please see chart on the next page for achievement of specific performance measures.

RttT ELC Final Progress Report for Early Childhood Directors Leadership Institute

Outcomes and Outputs	Year 1 (2013)	Year 2 (2014)	Year 3 (2015)	Final Results
Project Coordinator will be recruited and selected (criteria for selection will be shared with and approved by NCDCEE)	Met Project Coordinator hired 1/2/2013			Met ; Lisa Shporer was hired as Project Coordinator
Leadership Faculty will be convened to inform development of DLI training curriculum	Met Leadership faculty meetings were convened between April 2013 and June 2014 as evidenced by meeting minutes.	Met Leadership faculty meetings were convened between April 2013 and June 2014 as evidenced by meeting minutes.		Met Leadership faculty meetings were convened between April 2013 and June 2014 as evidenced by meeting minutes.
Project Coordinator will begin recruitment and selection of a geographically diverse pool of eligible Directors	Met Application information (with input from NCDCEE) for the director participants was mailed to all three-, four-, and five- star rated licensed <u>centers</u> in North Carolina. This was followed by several email blasts and information dispersed by R&Rs and local Smart Start agencies. Applications were received from 173 directors in over 50 counties. A total of 110 administrators were chosen to participate in ECDLI.			Met Application information (with input from NCDCEE) for the director participants was mailed to all three-, four-, and five- star rated licensed <u>centers</u> in North Carolina. This was followed by several email blasts and information dispersed by R&Rs and local Smart Start agencies. Applications were received from 173 directors in over 50 counties. A total of 110 administrators were chosen to participate in ECDLI.

Outcomes and Outputs	Year 1 (2013)	Year 2 (2014)	Year 3 (2015)	Final Results
A diverse pool of Directors (ethnically, culturally, & racially) will be recruited and selected – 100% of all eligible directors will be recruited to participate.	<p>Met Applications to participate were received from 173 directors. Applications solicited information about applicant and program demographics including ethnicity, geographic location, program staff and staff size, population served, administrator's years of experience and education, and questions about their leadership perspectives, administrative challenges, and reason for applying to participate.</p> <p>A total of 110 administrators were chosen to participate in ECDLI.</p>			<p>Met Applications to participate were received from 173 directors. Applications solicited information about applicant and program demographics including ethnicity, geographic location, program staff and staff size, population served, administrator's years of experience and education, and questions about their leadership perspectives, administrative challenges, and reason for applying to participate.</p> <p>A total of 110 administrators were chosen to participate in ECDLI.</p>
DLI Training Curriculum will be completed by Project Coordinator with review by Leadership Faculty and be approved by NCDCEE	<p>Partially met .5 CEU of the curriculum was developed and approved. The remaining .5 CEU will be completed in CY14</p>	<p>Met The second .5 CEU was developed and approved in CY14.</p>		<p>Met Training curriculum, totaling 1.0 CEU, was developed and approved.</p>
Coaches will be recruited and selected	<p>Met 10 geographically disbursed coaches were selected.</p>			<p>Met 10 geographically disbursed coaches were selected.</p>
Three two-day Institutes will be convened	<p>Exceeded In CY13, one three-day Institute was convened October 28-30th.</p>	<p>Exceeded In CY14, a second three-day Institute was convened August 4-6th.</p>	<p>Exceeded In CY15, a third three-day Institute was convened April 27-29th.</p>	<p>Exceeded Three three-day Institutes were convened, one in each CY from 2013-2015.</p>

Outcomes and Outputs	Year 1 (2013)	Year 2 (2014)	Year 3 (2015)	Final Results
100 Participants will attend all of the training sessions (unless an excused absence for extenuating circumstances is granted by the project coordinator).	Met A total of 101 of 110 accepted ECDLI participants attended the Institute. These 101 participants attended all sessions of the October 2013 Institute, as evidenced by attendance records. Eight accepted directors did not attend the first Institute thereby losing eligibility to participate in the project.	Partially Met A total of 86 ECDLI participants attended the second Institute. These 86 participants attended all sessions of the August 2014 Institute, as evidenced by attendance records.	Partially Met A total of 70 ECDLI participants attended the third Institute. These 70 participants attended all sessions of the April 2015 Institute as evidenced by attendance records.	Partially Met: Year One goal was exceeded with 101 participants; Year Two and Three participant goals were partially met as ECDLI participation reduced over time primarily related to Director's leaving their positions.
100 PAS pre-assessment conducted for all participants	Partially Met 12 PAS pre-assessments were completed in CY13 as evidenced by PAS documentation.	Met 88/The remaining PAS pre-assessments were completed in CY14 as evidenced by PAS documentation.		Met 100 PAS pre-assessments were completed.
100 Center PAS action plans are created by participants with support of DLI coaches	Partially Met 12 PAS action plans were completed in CY13 as evidenced by finalized action plan documents.	Met 88/The remaining PAS action plans were completed in CY14 as evidenced by finalized action plan documents.		Met 100 PAS action plans were completed as evidenced by finalized action plan documents.
Implement series of STOC for 100 directors with support of coaches	Not Met Professional development on STOC did not occur in CY13.	Met All participating directors implemented STOC with the support of coaches as evidenced by STOC worksheets.	Met All participating directors implemented STOC with the support of coaches as evidenced by STOC worksheets.	Met All participating directors implemented STOC with the support of coaches as evidenced by STOC worksheets.
The project coaching staff will provide direct (face-to-face) contact with each Institute participant. 100% of Institute participants will receive at least 5 hours of direct contact with Coaches.	Exceeded Coaches have contacted participants via face to face visits, email, and phone calls.	Met All Institute participants received at least 5 hours of direct contact with coaches, as evidenced by coaching contact hour logs.	Met All Institute participants received at least 5 hours of direct contact with coaches, as evidenced by coaching contact hour logs.	Met All Institute participants received at least 5 hours of direct contact with coaches, as evidenced by coaching contact hour logs.

Outcomes and Outputs	Year 1 (2013)	Year 2 (2014)	Year 3 (2015)	Final Results
80% of Institute participants will have a positive reaction to each of the Institute Sessions	Exceeded 95% of all participants reported being satisfied or very satisfied in all sessions provided during the 2013 Institute.	Exceeded 100% of all participants reported being satisfied or very satisfied in all sessions provided during the 2014 Institute.	Met At least 80% of participants reported being satisfied or very satisfied with each Institute session offered during the 2015 Institute.	Met At least 80% of participants reported being satisfied or very satisfied with each Institute session offered during each three-day Institute.
90% of Institute participants will have a positive reaction to the overall Institute (all three Institutes – 1 st quarter 2015)			Exceeded At least 98 % of participants reported being satisfied or very satisfied with all Institutes.	Exceeded At least 98% of participants reported being satisfied or very satisfied with all Institutes.
90% of Institute participants will have implemented positive changes and improvements in their programs by the completion of the Institute. (1 st quarter 2014, 1 st quarter 2015)		Not Met The STOC model will be used by participants beginning in CY2015.	Partially Met 87% of participants in Institute III (2015) demonstrated positive changes in their programs based on the STOC measure.	Partially Met 87% of participants in Institute III (2015) demonstrated positive changes in their programs based on the STOC measure.
90% of Institute participants will report positive experience with coaching supports (face-to-face, phone, and email) (1 st quarter 2014, 1 st quarter 2015)		Exceeded 99% of participants reported positive experiences with coaching supports (face-to-face, phone, and email).	Met 90% of Institute participants reported satisfaction with coaching supports (face-to-face, phone, and email).	Met 90% of Institute participants reported satisfaction with coaching supports (face-to-face, phone, and email).
90% of Institute participants will have implemented positive changes and improvements in their programs by the completion of the Institute (2015)			Met 90% of Institute III (2015) participants demonstrated positive changes in their programs as evidenced by improvements in the PAS Scores from pre to post test on at least one of the PAS subscales.	Met 90% of Institute III (2015) participants demonstrated positive changes in their programs as evidenced by improvements in the PAS Scores from pre to post test on at least one of the PAS subscales.

Outcomes and Outputs	Year 1 (2013)	Year 2 (2014)	Year 3 (2015)	Final Results
90% of Institute participants will have implemented positive changes and improvements in their programs by the completion of the Institute (2015)			Met 90% of Institute III (2015) participants have implemented positive changes and improvements in their programs as evidenced by improvements in the PMI scores from pre to post test on at least one of the PMI subscales.	Met 90% of Institute III (2015) participants have implemented positive changes and improvements in their programs as evidenced by improvements in the PMI scores from pre to post test on at least one of the PMI subscales.
90% of Institute participants will implement positive changes and improvements in their programs by the completion of the Institute (2015)			Met 90% of Institute participants demonstrated positive changes in their programs as evidenced by improvements in the CARD scores from pre to post test on at least one of the CARD subscales.	Met 90% of Institute participants demonstrated positive changes in their programs as evidenced by improvements in the CARD scores from pre to post test on at least one of the CARD subscales.

Challenges:

Over the course of the project, a few challenges were experienced. The primary challenge was the retention of participants in the ECDLI project. Initially, 110 applicants were selected for participation. Due to attrition, only 70 participants attended the final ECDLI institute in April 2015. Attrition of participants was related to a number of issues, primarily including director turnover and director health issues.

Lessons Learned:

- Engaging directors continues to be the missing link in their growth and development.
- Administrators want to professionalize the field of ECE.
- Administrators desire program improvement and want to participate in the *Program Administration Scale*.
- Administrators have gained knowledge of the importance of documentation.
- Networking and resource sharing is essential to directors
- The support of coaches is important. Throughout the project, coaches positively impacted their team members through visits, emails, identification of resources and additional supports. In fact, some of the teams and coaches have decided to continue meeting even though the project has concluded.
- In regard to PAS scores, some trends were identified among low and high scoring items.
 - *Lowest scoring items on the PAS included:*
 - Staff Development (2.37 Item 3)
 - Compensation (Score 2.24 Item 4)
 - Benefits (Score 2.30 Item 5)
 - Risk Management (Score 2.77 Item 8)

- Internal Communications (Score 2.35 Item 9)
- Strategic Planning (Score 2.61 Item 15)
- *Highest PAS scores on the pre-PAS assessments included:*
 - Facilities Management (Score 6.46 Item 7)
 - Family Supports and Involvement (Score 6.18 Item 17)
 - Technological Resources (Score 6.81 Item 20)
 - Marketing and Public Relations
 - External Communications (Score 5.52 Item 18)
 - Community Outreach (Score 5.60 Item 19)

Closing Summary:

One hundred and ten directors of 3-, 4-, & 5-star centers from 52 NC counties were accepted into ECDLI. A group of 70 early care and education program leaders from diverse programs, working with one of nine coaches, completed this multi-year initiative and have:

- developed their individual leadership and program management knowledge and skills and
- created and achieved personal and program improvement goals.

These directors:

- completed assessment tools to identify leadership and programmatic areas of strength, weakness, and opportunities for improvement;
- created and implemented program improvement action plans to address targeted needs based on findings of the following assessment tools:
 - *Small Tests Of Change* (teams brainstorm improvement strategies, implement them on a small scale, measure the results and then act based on those results)
 - *Program Management Inventory (PAS)* (evaluates the management climate of early childhood program)
 - *DiSC Profile for Leaders* (detailed personal leadership traits and abilities), and
 - *Program Administration Scale* (designed to reliably measure the leadership and management practices of center-based early childhood programs based on ten subscales: Human Resources Development, Personnel Cost and Allocation, Center Operations, Child Assessment, Fiscal Management, Program Planning and Evaluation, Family Partnerships, Marketing and Public Relations, Technology and Staff Qualifications);
- enhanced staff/ family orientations and internal/external communications by using program evaluation distributed to staff and parents;
- developed salary scales, budget needs assessment, professional development plans, staff evaluations, emergency procedures, and strategic plans;
- increased staff involvement in staff meetings, community involvement, and contact hours for professional development (15-20 annual contact hours);
- attended three multi-day Institutes on early childhood leadership guided by a curriculum developed within this grant (20 hours/2.0 CEUs awarded upon completion); 100% of cohort rated Institutes as excellent/good;

- participated in curriculum developed by ECDLI: *Introduction to Leadership and Management* (1.0 CEU), and as well as *Leading the Way to Quality-The Director's Role* (0.5 CEU) preparation for the Program Administration Scale (PAS) and *Strategies for Leadership and Management* (0.5 CEU) based on staff and director program evaluation.
- engaged in on-line networking opportunities to enhance their leadership and build professional relationships across participants; developed 22 learning communities based on director interests which include, program evaluation, personnel cost and allocations, staff orientation, strategic planning, inspired leadership, family engagement and technological policies;
- participated in post-assessment at the conclusion of the twenty-month ECDLI program that measured leadership and program management improvements achieved with a cohort post assessment average of 5.12 reflecting a 25% increase over pre-assessment scores (national average PAS score is 3.41) and;
- evaluated coaches on the support, knowledge, resources, and guidance they provide based on site visits, team meetings, and online support. Ninety percent of participants rated coaches as excellent/good.

Recommendations:

- Continued investment in professional development opportunities (including both training and technical assistance/coaching) for directors.
- Investment in professional development opportunities for technical assistance providers/coaches in administrative topics, specifically the PAS.
- Investment in the conversion of Institute delivered CEUs to self-standing CEU modules and/or online CEU modules would support increased access by directors to leadership/business administration training.
- Participants benefited from use of the electronic learning platform which enabled efficient sharing of resources and supported self-facilitated communities of learning.

Commentary from Institute Participants:

In regard to what part of the Institute was best for them personally:

- "The information presented was a re-awakening for me. I am anxious to get back and start leading more, rather than manage."
- "I will process change with more planning. The information I will share with my board will help me with advocating for changes I recognize as crucial in benefiting the program."
- "My coach is a role model of a professional business person. Encouraging, honest, enthusiastic, willing to help and guide."
- "Being with other directors. Listening and learning from them."
- "Networking with peers and creating a supportive community."
- "Getting to meet and make new connections with other professionals in the ECE field."
- "Being able to make improvements on my leadership abilities."
- "The best part was meeting other directors and experts, and learning that we shared similar challenges; also celebrating successes."
- "To know I'm not the only one with challenges. The institute gave me insight on how to be a better leader and to face the challenges."